

'Red Books' can become collectibles

By Roger Boye

This week's column answers more questions from readers.

Q—My father left us two old "Red Books," the famous coin catalog by R.S. Yeoman. They are the 11th and 12th editions, published in 1957 and 1958. Are such items valuable? If so, who might want to buy them?

T.P., Chicago

A—Some early editions of "A Guide Book of United States Coins"—the so-called "Red Book" still published today—are popular collectibles. The specimens you own might retail for as much as \$80 each if they are in "mint condition" [prices vary with condition].

One of the few dealers who specializes in old "Red Books" is Edward Lesniak, P.O. Box 9202, Elizabeth, N.J. 07202. Among other things, Lesniak has researched Red Books with printing errors, such as the 1962 edition missing a page or certain 1949 and 1984 editions with pages bound upside down. Such mistakes often enhance a book's market value.

Q—I've found a \$1 bill, series 1985, with a blue back side, rather than the usual green. Have I struck it rich?

R.W., Wheaton

A—No. The green ink turns blue when exposed to certain acids and turns yellow when treated with an alkali. Experts say the federal government has yet to produce a single Federal Reserve note with the wrong color of ink.

Q—I have a one-ounce U.S. gold item dated 1982 and widely advertised 'at the time of issue. How can you say in your column that the American Eagle is the first gold bullion piece in U.S. history?

R.S., Batavia

A—Earlier this decade, Uncle Sam minted one-ounce and half-ounce gold medallions depicting authors and other Americans who excelled in the arts, but those keepsakes had no legal-tender value. American Eagles are bullion coins—lawful money—with face amounts ranging from \$50 for the one-ounce specimen to \$5 for the one-tenth ounce.